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ABSTRACT

Two career-oriented communication programs, developed specifically for engineering and industrial administration majors, are designed to integrate communication theory with skill development, organizational theory, and practical job experience. One of these, the industrial administration program, includes courses in written and oral communication, principles of psychology, small group interaction, organizational behavior, persuasion and attitude change, organizational communication, managing for effective performance, quantitative methods for behavioral analysis, and organizational development. The other program, in engineering, involves courses in written and oral communication, behavioral science, speech, communication in small groups, journalism, principles and techniques of interviewing, and principles of organizational development. Both of these programs are planned for the four-year student and additional courses are offered for overseas students and remedial students. (Brief course descriptions are included.) (MAI)

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BUILDING A CAREER-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM

by

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General Motors Institute

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

A paper presented at the annual convention of the Central States Speech Association, Kansas City, April, 1975.

CS502247

In July of 1968 the Department of Communication and Organizational Behavior was created at General Motors Institute in Flint, Michigan. At that time the department was given the charge to develop a career-oriented curriculum in communication and organizational behavior. For the 50 years prior to 1968 speech had been primarily a single course taught out of the so-called Speech Section of the Humanities Department. So the curriculum-building process began pretty much from scratch.

By way of background you should know that GMI offers programs culminating in Bachelor's degrees in three areas of engineering (mechanical, industrial and electrical) and in management (specifically entitled Industrial Administration). There are no majors, minors, or graduate students in speech or communication at GMI However, our department plays a major role in the Industrial Administration (IA) curriculum. Within this framework, and with a limited number of credit hours allotted to us, we were faced with the problem of selecting only the minimum essentials in a program of career-oriented communication.

With this background, and almost seven years of learning from experience, let us look at the existing curricula. First the Industrial Administration program, then the Engineering program.

THE INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

First Year	F-12 Written and Oral Communication I	3 credits
	F-17 Principles of Psychology (the individual)	4 credits
Second Year	F-23 Small Group Interaction (the small group)	3 credits
Third Year	F-30 Organizational Behavior (the complex organization)	4 credits
Fourth Year	F-40 Written and Oral Communication II	3 credits
Electives	F-73 Persuasion and Attitude Change	4 credits
	F-74 Organizational Communication	4 credits
	F-75 Managing for Effective Performance	4 credits
	F-76 Quantitative Methods for Behavioral Analysis	4 credits
	F-77 Organizational Development	4 credits

Course Descriptions

F-12 Written and Oral Communication I

This course is designed to help the student write and speak more proficiently as a means of functioning effectively in an organization. Emphasis is placed on the basic theory and principles underlying practical communication techniques. Students engage in a variety of expository and persuasive writing and speaking assignments. Student performance is analyzed as a means of promoting individual improvement. The Freshman Report, a GMI requirement, is included in this course.

F-17 Principles of Psychology

This course is designed to aid the student in gaining a more thorough and accurate understanding of the behavior of himself and others. Stress will be placed on the psychological factors which influence the individual's development, activities and relations with others in all situations. The course emphasizes the effect of individual differences, motivation, emotions, frustration, perception, learning, physiology,

development, and adjustment problems on human behavior.

F-23 Small-Group Interaction

Current behavioral theory and research in the area of small-group interaction are discussed. Specific subject areas include group leadership, role theory, conflict resolution, structure and communication, social influence processes, problem solving, conformity, group productivity, cohesion and commitment, decision, and psychological climate. Applications of these concepts to real-life situations are emphasized.

F-30 Organizational Behavior

This course uses behavioral science based knowledge to focus on three levels of behavior in an industrial organization: individual, group, and organizational. Within this framework topics such as motivation to work, leadership, organizational communication, organization and control, union-management relations, and human resources accounting receive special attention. A number of exercises are conducted to help the student develop skill in applying his knowledge to organizations.

F-40 Written and Oral Communication II

Principles and techniques of advanced writing and speaking are presented as specialized forms of communication in an industrial organization. Clear organization, clear development, conciseness, and adaptation to particular situations are emphasized. Students engage in a variety of expository and persuasive writing and speaking assignments oriented both to their immediate and long-range needs in industrial administration.

F-73 Persuasion and Attitude Change

Major theories, techniques, assumptions, and research findings in

the area of persuasion and attitude change are presented. Specific subject areas include the changing of value orientations, open and closed communication systems, fear and threat appeals, message structures, credibility and power strategies, immunization against counter persuasion, and strategies in advertising. Students engage in a number of discussions and class projects oriented both to a criticism of various strategies of persuasion utilized in business and industry and to construction of more innovative and effective tools for effecting attitude change.

F-74 Organizational Communication

Theories and approaches used in identifying and effecting organizational change are treated through the use of case studies. Various organizational development models are studied. Topics include contemporary organizational values, human and structural communication barriers, and vertical and horizontal information flow.

F-75 Managing for Effective Performance

This course examines the relationship of people to the organization in which they work. Primary attention will be given to the psychological, sociological, and occupational mental health concepts and principles which are of value in managing for effective job performance.

F-76 Quantitative Methods in Behavioral Analysis

This course is intended to provide skills and knowledge necessary to conduct and critically evaluate behavioral science approaches to problem-solving in organizations. Topics covered include scientific theory, problem definition, experimental design, measurement, questionnaire design, data interpretation, and various other problem-solving methods. The student will critically evaluate his own and others' proposals for analyzing behavior as it relates to effective performance.

F-77 Organizational Development

This course is designed to give persons the theory, rationale, and skills necessary to implement a planned and systematic approach to organizational development and change which will increase the effectiveness of all aspects of the organization. Topics include intervention methodology and strategy, survey feedback, process consultation, etc., technological and structural aspects of change; and interpersonal skills in intervention.

THE ENGINEERING PROGRAM

First Year	F-12 Written and Oral Communication I	3 credits
Fourth Year	F-42 Behavioral Science	3 credits
Fifth Year	F-40 Written and Oral Communication II	3 credits
Electives	F-60 Speech	3 credits
	F-68 Communication in Small Groups	3 credits
	F-70 Journalism	3 credits
	F-72 Principles and Techniques of Interviewing	3 credits
	F-78 Principles of Organizational Development	3 credits

F-12 Written and Oral Communication I

This course is designed to help the student write and speak more proficiently as a means of functioning effectively in an organization. Emphasis is placed on the basic theory and principles underlying practical communication techniques. Students engage in a variety of expository and persuasive writing and speaking assignments. Student performance is analyzed as a means of promoting individual improvement. The Freshman Report, a GMI requirement, is included in this course.

F-40 Written and Oral Communication II

Principles and techniques of advanced writing and speaking are presented as specialized forms of communication in an industrial organization. Clear organization, clear development, conciseness, and adaptation to particular situations are emphasized. Students engage in a variety of expository and persuasive writing and speaking assignments oriented both to their immediate and long-range needs in industrial administration.

F-42 Behavioral Science

Theoretical and empirical foundations essential to understanding the behavior of individuals and groups in organizations are examined. Empirically-derived knowledge about human behavior is related to problems encountered in the management of human effort. Individual differences, motivation, learning, perception, attitude change and basic group dynamics are discussed, with emphasis upon their behavioral implications in organizational functioning in such areas as leadership, organizational development, and organizational structure.

F-60 Speech

This course is designed to give the student an understanding of the process of communication and to help him become more proficient in speaking situations. Stress is placed on sound attitudes toward the speaking situation, audience adaptation, principles of clear organization, development of ideas, and techniques of effective persuasion. Considerable opportunity for speaking experience is provided, using videotape recording and playback facilities.

F-68 Communication in Small Groups

This course is designed to help the student develop an understanding of human behavior in small groups. A behavioral science approach is used, with special attention to the role of communication and interpersonal relations in idea-sharing, problem-solving, and decision-making. Ample laboratory experience is provided to reinforce theoretical insights and promote individual proficiency in applying these insights.

F-70 Journalism

By engaging in a variety of writing assignments and projects, the student learns good journalistic practice and improves his overall ability to communicate in writing. Topics include the role of journalism in mass society, canons of journalism; journalism law; gathering material; writing news articles, features, and commentaries; and adapting to medium, purpose, and readers.

F-72 Principles and Techniques of Interviewing

This course provides a detailed study of the principles and techniques of interviewing as they are adapted to business and industrial interviewing situations. Understanding of the elements of oral dyadic communication is stressed. Special attention is given to the interview as a means of increasing the effectiveness of supervisory and staff personnel. Demonstrations, role-playing, and field investigations are utilized in order to help the student develop skill and confidence in using the interview.

F-78 Principles of Organizational Development

This course is designed to provide the student with a basic understanding of organizational development theory and method. Topics

include background and theory, strategies and models, case studies, applications to changing environments and motivations, and measurement of effectiveness.

In addition we have two areas of specialty courses for overseas students and for students who need remedial courses. These courses are described below.

THE GENERAL MOTORS OVERSEAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

F-34 Written Communication for Overseas Students

With a major emphasis on intra-organizational reports, this course for overseas students seeks to heighten the students' awareness of the organization's need for effective communication, to help them develop a systematic approach to writing, and to increase their skill in exposition. Topics include the nature of organizational communication and of business writing, and techniques for writing letters, memoranda, proposals, and reports.

F-69 English for Foreign Students

This course offers help to the non-native English speaker so that he may adjust to using American English. The course work includes the recognition and production of spoken English. Students practice speaking the language with the help of tape recordings.

THE REMEDIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS PROGRAM

First Year (2 semesters)
- F-1 (R) Reading Improvement
- F-1 (W) Writing
- F-1 (S) Speech/Listening

Course Descriptions

F-1 (R) Reading Improvement

Methods for improving the student's vocabulary reading efficiency and study skills, and increasing his enjoyment of reading are discussed and practiced through the use of specially designed reading exercises. The major emphasis is on speed, comprehension, and flexibility in reading and on principles and techniques of effective study.

F-1 (W) Writing

The student develops confidence and ability in writing, primarily via structured activities and self-paced instruction. The emphasis is primarily on exposition and persuasion, rather than description and narration. Freshman competence in standard American language is expected by the end of the course.

F-1 (S) Speech/Listening

The student will deliver informative speeches, study the principles and techniques of oral communication as they apply to job, community, and personal life, utilize audio and audio-visual equipment for critique and improvement, and study organization of messages. The student will work to improve listening comprehension via programmed learning and other laboratory exercises.

These programs have a number of features that we feel prepare the student for a career in industry. First, we attempt to integrate communication theory and skill development. In the past we have found that a balance between the two is superior to either approach without the other. Second, we attempt to blend communication theory with organizational

theory so that an integrated learning experience will result. Finally, we attempt to integrate theory with day-to-day practical application. A concentrated effort is made to show the relevance of our instructional content to the students' own job situations.

In spite of these efforts, we feel there are some weaknesses in the program. First, we simply have too few credit hours to sufficiently develop students' in the various communication areas. For example, one course in small group interaction is better than none, but some follow-up courses would be very desirable. Second, our range of courses is narrower than we would like. As it stands, we would like to add still more courses in such areas as intercultural communication, mass communication, and advanced seminars in several communication topic areas. This does not seem a likely possibility at the present time.

For departments of Speech or Communication which have an interest in developing a career-oriented curriculum, your opportunities should be less limited than ours. First, you could change the content of existing courses to include more organizational applications. Methods such as role plays, simulations, and case studies help immensely. Second, you could add new courses (possibly by eliminating old ones if retrenchment is a reality on your campus). Third, you could work with departments or colleges of Business Administration to develop integrated multi-disciplinary programs. This presupposes that such a liaison would be mutually agreeable. In any case, reactions from our graduates indicate that the results are worth the effort. One of our GMI graduates is after all President of General Motors.